Draft
Environmental Assessment

BLACKTAIL MEADOWS FISHING ACCESS SITE IMPROVEMENTS

Looking southwest from Swenson Way at the proposed orientation area (left). S. Dalbey photo 8/5/02

February 2003

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Blacktail Meadows Fishing Access Site Improvements
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 Checklist

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of proposed state action:** Construct 8-stall gravel parking area with cul-de-sac turnaround; install latrine, picnic tables, roadside approach signs, and site identification, dedication and regulation signs, bike rack, trail with fishing nodes and footbridge; plant trees, seed/reclaim disturbed ground; plant trees; reroute or bury power lines.

2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:** The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605, which directs Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. The opportunity for public involvement regarding the proposed project is provided under MCA 23-1-110 (please refer to Appendix A to review the qualification checklist).

   A managing agreement between FWP and the Beaverhead Outdoors Association (BOA) outlines the responsibilities of these parties. In brief, FWP owns the site and will enforce site regulations, manage the fishery resources, and provide technical assistance for the site improvements, including Montana Environmental Policy Act compliance. The BOA will raise funds needed to construct the proposed facilities and maintain and publicize the site.

3. **Name of project:** Blacktail Meadows Fishing Access Site Improvements

4. **Name, address, and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):**
   Co-sponsored by Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)
   and
   Beaverhead Outdoors Association
   Dave Walton, Vice President, 911 South Washington, Dillon, MT 59725

5. **If applicable:**
   Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: Spring 2003
   Estimated Completion Date: Ongoing, depending on funding
   Current Status of Project Design (% complete): approximately 50% complete; site design as proposed is contingent upon approval by the (Subdivision) Owners' Association; engineering specifics are not complete.

6. **Location affected by proposed action (county, range, township):**
   The site can be reached from Interstate 15 Exit #63 on the north edge of Dillon; turn south on Swenson Way (previously known as Blacktail Boulevard) and travel approximately 0.3 mile to the pond. The fishing access site is in Beaverhead County, Dillon city limits, Blacktail Deer Creek Meadows Subdivision, Township 7

South, Range 8 West, Section 18, SE¼ NW¼ and N½ SW¼. The site totals 14.27 acres. Please refer to Appendix B: Site Location Map.

The parking area is proposed east of Swenson Way in Lot 3A, which totals 9.53 acres. The trails, footbridge, orientation area are proposed around the pond in Lot 1D, west of Swenson Way, totaling 4.74 acres.

7. Project size—estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

	Acres		Acres
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	0
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	0
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation	0.4	Dry cropland	0
		Forestry	0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	0.3	Rangeland	0
		Other	0

Total site size is 14.27 acres. The proposed parking area and cul-de-sac turnaround will disturb approximately 0.4 acres of open grassland. Approximately 13,000 square feet of trails and six fishing nodes with access trails will disturb about 0.3 acres of riparian zone around the pond.

8. Map/site plan: Attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

Please refer to Appendix B: Site Location Map, Appendix C: Site Aerial Photo, and Appendix D: Master Site Plan.

9. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits: permits will be filed by the BOA at least 2 weeks prior to project start.

Agency Name	Permit
City of Dillon	Sanitation Variance
	Bulding permit
FWP	124 Stream Protection Permit
	(Footbridge across Pigtail Slough)

(b) Funding:

Estimated cost of the proposed construction is $55,000, if opened for bid to private contractors; however, much of this project will be completed using in-kind services, materials and donations. Current funding is listed below.

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Beaverhead Outdoor Association	$9,000 plus ongoing fundraising & grants
FWP (Fishing Access Site Protection Account)	$5,000 +/- for MEPA compliance, design and technical assistance

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
Dillon City Planning Board	site approach and identification signs crosswalk and pedestrian xing signs
(Subdivision) Owners' Association	approval of development plans

10. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:

Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) and the Beaverhead Outdoors Association (BOA) cooperatively propose to improve the Blacktail Meadows Fishing Access Site (FAS) facilities. The BOA has agreed to fund and complete construction of the proposed facilities and maintain the site and new facilities. Components of the site plan would be installed using a combination of contracted services, volunteer labor, and donated materials and services as procured by Beaverhead Outdoors Association. The BOA would maintain the grounds and facilities.

The BOA and FWP proposes to complete the project components in the following progression, though this order may vary slightly depending on funding or donations acquired. Eight gravel parking stalls are proposed to allow off-street parking with a turn-around cul-de-sac. This area would be bordered with rock barriers to limit off-road vehicle travel. A pedestrian crosswalk and signs would link the pond area to the parking area. A latrine would be installed on site. Approach signs near the Interstate 15 interchange and an entrance sign along Swenson Way (previously known as Blacktail Boulevard) would identify the site. An orientation area would include a regulation sign, and a land donor recognition sign. Approximately 4 picnic tables and a bicycle rack would be placed on the site. The existing single-track trail around the lake is proposed for widening to five feet, covered with weed barrier fabric, then surfaced with wood-chips and bordered with railroad ties anchored with metal rods. A footbridge would be installed to complete the trail loop and cross Pigtail Slough at the north end of the property. Six fishing nodes with connecting spurs off the main trail would ease access to the water's edge. Areas disturbed from construction would be seeded with a local grass seed mix; approximately 18 trees would be planted at various locations. Appropriate boundary fencing may be necessary in the future. The BOA also proposes to have the power company move or bury the overhead powerline traversing the site.

Swenson Way intersects the fishing access site and is a 25 mph road that connects western, downtown Dillon to the northern Interstate 15 interchange area. This area was recently subdivided for commercial use. The parking area is proposed east of Swenson Way since the FAS property adjacent to the pond does not provide sufficient space. The site improvements are intended to improve physical access in an area where on-street parking is not allowed. Because of the proximity of the pond to Dillon, it is anticipated that many youth and families would also ride bikes or walk to the site; thus, pedestrian crosswalk markings and a bicycle rack are proposed. Widening and surfacing the existing single track trails and providing fishing nodes will provide easier access to the entire pond. The footbridge will provide more direct access to the north and west lakeshores.

Photo is taken from Swenson Way looking northeast to the proposed parking entrance and parking area (meadow foreground). Blacktail Deer Creek flows along the brush in the background.
S. Dalbey photo 8/5/02

A pre-cast, sealed vault latrine with exterior aggregate surface would maintain a sanitary site. This is the proposed and preferred alternative by the project sponsors who are discussing options with the Dillon City Commissioners, since an ordinance currently prohibits vault latrines inside city limits. The Although the FAS is within the city limits, this is a commercial area on the edge of town, which won't impact residential aesthetics that could be a concern at other locations within city limits. A sealed vault latrine is preferred because of the low installation and maintenance costs. Neither FWP nor the BOA have the funds to install or maintain a full flush restroom. In addition, a full restroom facility would be closed to the public from about October 1 to April 30 each year, because of cold temperatures and the need to winterize a facility with no heat source. The proposed latrine is also consistent with FASs across the state. The location of the latrine may be determined by the need (or not) for sewer and water services

This site was donated and acquired by FWP in 2002 for the purpose of providing open space recreation and an urban, family fishing access. The pond is proposed for youth fishing only, though the Blacktail Deer Creek corridor on the east side of Swenson Way would remain open to all ages and managed under the standard fishing season and limits for the Central Fishing District (with the exception that the combined trout limit includes cutthroat trout). The pond is not connected by surface flow to either Pigtail Slough or Blacktail Deer Creek. FWP intends to provide annual plants of rainbow trout, both juvenile fish and mature retired brood stock, in order to provide for the pond fisheries resource.

The proposed construction would be subject to approval by the Blacktail Deer Creek Meadows Minor Subdivision Owners' Association and by the City of Dillon. Several variances to the subdivision's Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions were issued by the Owners Association (April 18, 2002) in an effort to facilitate this project. Eight variances were passed, including the following:

- allowing natural ground cover in place of formal landscaping;
- allowing 5 years to construct screening around garbage receptacles, if owner removes trash from lots weekly in the interim;
- portable or temporary restrooms can be used for five years until a building meeting the subdivision covenants can be built;
- five years is allowed to complete the planned development.

One covenant which was not granted a variance indicates that parking areas will be asphalt or concrete surface. In the preferred alternative, a gravel surface is proposed for the small parking area. Asphalt would be considered "out of character" for a natural area and would be cost prohibitive, though it is considered in Alternative D under Part II.2 of this document. The Owners' Association will be asked for a variance regarding this convenant.

11. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Parks Division
- Wildlife Division
- Fisheries Division
- Design & Construction Bureau

Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				1a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		yes	1b.
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				1c.
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?			X		yes	1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

1a. The proposed parking area, trail, fishing nodes and footbridge will move surface soils only. Installation of a latrine would require excavating a new hole for sealed vault placement. No changes to long-term soil stability or geologic substructure are anticipated from these actions.

1b. Construction of day-use parking, trails, footbridge and fishing nodes will disrupt, displace, compact and cover soils on less than one acre of the 14.27-acre site. This hardening of the site will reduce total vegetative productivity. Impacts will be mitigated by planting a grass mix in areas disrupted during construction. The reestablished grasses will reduce future erosion and moisture loss. Rock road barriers will eliminate future vehicle traffic off graveled, designated routes, thus localizing use and allowing high fertility and production on the remainder of the site. The site plan purposefully utilizes existing single-track trails that have been disturbed in the past by recurring foot traffic.

1c. This site was a borrow pit for the Swenson Way road and sidewalk construction and few native features remain in the vicinity. There are no unique geologic or physical features in the areas proposed for construction.

1d. This project will not directly modify the Blacktail Meadows Pond shoreline or Blacktail Deer Creek shoreline. Installation of a footbridge across Pigtail Slough will create minor and temporary siltation, but not significant deposition or erosion. Silt fences will be used during construction of the parking area to reduce the

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*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

possibility of siltation into Blacktail Deer Creek should precipitation events occur during or immediately after construction.

2. AIR **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***				**Can Impact Be Mitigated ***	**Comment Index**
	Unknown *	**None**	**Minor ***	**Potentially Significant**		
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X		yes	2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		N/A				
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

2a. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions will be created by equipment during construction of the gravel parking area, trail, fishing nodes and latrine installation. Gravel surface on the parking area combined with low traffic speeds in that area will limit the dust created by vehicle use of the site. Surfacing the trail with wood chips will greatly reduce dust after construction.

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3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X		yes	3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		N/A				
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		N/A				
n. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3a. Minor and temporary turbidity will occur in Pigtail Slough during the footbridge installation and for a short time after installation. FWP policy prohibits the use of treated lumber products in standing or running water, such as in the construction of the trail or footbridge. Use of silt fencing around the parking area construction will reduce potential turbidity of Blacktail Deer Creek should rainfall cause a runoff event. Use of weed barrier fabric, woodchips and railroad tie borders over disturbed soils for trail construction will reduce possible erosion and turbidity in the pond. In addition, thick riparian grasses and vegetation surrounding the proposed construction areas will absorb surface runoff prior to reaching the pond or creeks; thus, turbidity would be minimal. Temperatures and dissolved oxygen are not expected to change.

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4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		yes	4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		yes	4e.
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4a. The area proposed for eight gravel parking spaces and cul-de-sac turn-around has mixed grasses. Construction will eliminate about 0.4 acres of grasslands in this area. The five-feet-wide woodchip trail around the pond will eliminate about 0.3 acres of thick grassland. Larger bushes, such as buffalo berry, willow, rose and Russian olive will be retained. FWP construction standards restrict ground disturbance to the immediate project area and requires scarification and seeding of disturbed areas upon project completion. Road barriers will limit off-road travel, thus reducing impacts to vegetation by unrestricted vehicle travel.

4c. A database search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program was conducted on February 3, 2003.. No plant species of concern in the vicinity of the proposed project were found, nor are any expected to occur on the site. Much of this area was disturbed during the construction of Swenson Way.

4e. Construction and additional traffic tend to increase the possibility of noxious weeds becoming established. Seeding of disrupted soils after construction reduces the potential for additional weed infestation by providing competition from a mix of hearty grasses. Thistle species, dandelion species, spotted knapweed and houndstongue currently exist on the site. The BOA and FWP staff will monitor the site after construction and weeds will be eradicated under the guidelines of the FWP Region 3 Weed Management Plan and the County Weed District.

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** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X		yes	5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		N/A				
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		N/A				
j. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish and Wildlife (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

FWP Fisheries Biologist Dick Oswald does not anticipate impacts to the fisheries due to the proposed project (personal communication with Sue Dalbey, August 5, 2002). This small construction project is not likely to alter fish habitat due to the surrounding stable vegetation and site improvements design and if standard FWP Best Management Practices (BMPs) are implemented. One goal of the project is to improve angling opportunities for families and youth. FWP would provide annual plants of juvenile rainbow trout and mature retired brood stock rainbow trout in the pond.

The pond was originally constructed as a gravel borrow, but was steeply contoured to function as a trout pond. The pond is 18-20 feet deep at full pool and is not connected by surface flow with either Pigtail Slough or Blacktail Deer Creek. The pond does not currently provide spawning habitat for the natural recruitment of trout as a basis for a fishery.

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Lot 3A, on the east side of Swenson Way, includes about 2,113 feet of stream in three separate reaches. No trout population estimates currently exist for the stream reach. Limited fisheries investigations indicate that this reach supports wild populations of brown and rainbow trout, mountain whitefish, mottled sculpin, longnose dace, and white and longnose suckers. The stream is currently managed under the standard fishing season and limits for the Central Fishing District with the exception that the combined trout limit includes cutthroat trout. The 1999 FWP Statewide Fishing Pressure Estimates reported 610 angler-days of use on Blacktail Deer Creek. (*Swenson Blacktail Meadows Urban Children's Fishing Pond and Blacktail Deer Creek Urban Fishing Corridor [Acquisition] Draft Environmental Assessment.* FWP, April 2002.)

FWP Wildlife Biologist Gary Hammond does not anticipate major impacts to wildlife from the proposed project (personal communication with Sue Dalbey, August 5, 2002). The small size of area impacted and existing human activity from the interstate interchange precludes extensive use of the area by game animals or bird species. The Blacktail Deer Creek corridor provides a minimal amount of protective habitat, which will not be altered by this project. A variety of small, non-game mammals and reptiles and songbirds frequent the area, a few of which will be displaced by the proposed construction and reduction of grassland habitat. Day use restrictions will allow continued use of the site by nocturnal species.

5c. A small amount of small mammal habitat will be removed by construction of the proposed road, trail and fishing node construction and associated loss of grasslands. All disturbed areas will be reclaimed with a similar grass mix to encourage return of this habitat type.

5f. A database search was conducted by the Montana Natural Heritage Program on February 3, 2003, which revealed the presence of ferruginous hawk range about 1 mile west of the FAS . The ferruginous hawk is not a threatened or endangered species, however it is considered vulnerable in Montana (S3B rank). The proposed project is not expected to impact ferruginous hawks due to lack of habitat. No other species of concern are expected to occur in this vicinity, as per conversation with Wildlife Biologist Gary Hammond (personal communication August 5, 2002).

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B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		yes	6a.
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Noise/Electrical Effects (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

6a. Human noise levels will increase due to higher visitation, but this is expected to be a minor effect due to existing interstate traffic noise.

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?			X positive			7a.
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Use (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

7a. The area is subdivided for commercial use. The pond was a borrow pit for the construction of Swenson Way. The proposed improvements increase the productivity of this land site for urban recreational opportunities. This tract is too small to develop commercial buildings, and is close enough to draw youth and families from Dillon for short fishing trips. An improved park-like area is also an attractive first impression for tourists entering Dillon.

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8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		yes	8a.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X positive			8c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		N/A				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

8a. Combating noxious weeds often utilizes chemical spray. Weed treatment is conducted by trained personnel and follows the guidelines in the FWP Region 3 Weed Management Plan.

8c. Health hazards will be slightly reduced by providing off-road parking and a latrine.

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9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?			X		yes	9a.
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X		yes	9e.
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Impact (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

9a. Upon acquisition by FWP as a public fishing access, the human day-use at this site increased. Once site identification and approach signs are erected, visitation will continue to increase. The proposed improvements are intended to provide an urban fishing opportunity, ease access, and protect the site from heavy use. Because the City of Dillon prohibits parking on Swenson Way, the proposed eight-car parking area will help limit visitation or extreme influxes of people at one time.

9e. Providing off-road parking will reduce the traffic hazards caused by visitors previously parking along the street; however, pedestrians must use caution when crossing from the proposed parking area to the pond. Signing and a painted crosswalk will help alert drivers to this new pattern of movement.

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10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: *enforcement, site maintenance, litter & sewage removal*			X		yes	10a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources						10e.
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.						10f.
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

10a. The proposed improvements will increase visitation and angling; thus, a slight increase in fishing regulations and general recreation rules enforcement will be needed by FWP staff. Additional maintenance required after improving facilities at the FAS will be funded and conducted by the BOA, including trail upkeep, repairs, litter pick-up, weed management, regular latrine cleaning and occasional vault pumping. Visitors will be requested to pack out trash.

10e. According to the managing agreement between FWP and the BOA, FWP will provide technical assistance for design and construction, comply with MEPA, manage the fisheries and provide law enforcement; the BOA will fund the physical improvements and site maintenance. FWP's contributions will total approximately $5,000. The BOA's contribution is worth an estimated $50,000 to complete the project as proposed (if completed by private contract); however, much of this will come from in-kind services and donated labor and materials. Fund-raising efforts have raised about $9,000 and will be ongoing to complete the project.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

Preliminary Cost Estimates by FWP Design and Construction Bureau 1/23/03

Item	Item Total
Mobilization	$1,000.00
BMP Establishment (Erosion Control, etc.)	$1,000.00
Parking	
Gravel Parking Area	$7,500.00
Painted Crosswalk	$0.00
Rock Barriers around parking perimeter	$4,000.00
Trail	
Gravel Trail (wood chip trail would be less)	$7,800.00
Prefabricated Wooden Footbridge	$5,000.00
Landscaping	
Trees	$3,600.00
Reseed Disturbed Grasses	$630.00
Amenities and Signage	
Highway Approach Signs	$1,000.00
Double Sided Entrance Sign	$750.00
Regulation Sign	$800.00
Bicycle Rack	$500.00
ADA Accessible Picnic Tables	$1,200.00
Precast Concrete Vault Latrine	$6,600.00
Construction Cost Subtotal	$37,380.00
Design Consultant Fee - 15% Total Construction Cost	$5,607.00
Construction Management - 3% Total Construction Cost	$1,121.40
Contingency - 15% Total Construction Cost	$5,607.00
Total Cost Estimate	$54,929.40

10f. The BOA will fund maintenance costs, such as latrine cleaning and pumping, trail repairs and woodchip replacement, litter pick-up, and general repairs.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

** 11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X		yes	11a.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X positive			11c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		N/A				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

This is a past gravel borrow pit, since grown into a riparian area with grasses, buffalo berry, rose bush, cattails and willows around the pond and creek. It is a pocket of nature on the edge of Dillon, sandwiched between Interstate 15 and residential/commercial development. It is in a commercial subdivision not yet developed. Overhead power lines are obtrusive, running between Swenson Way and the pond.

Access to the site is easy from town and the interstate on paved, well-signed roads. Curbs, sidewalk, lamp posts and gravel/shrub/deciduous tree landscaping along the west side of Swenson Way give the site an urban character.

11a. The parking area will alter the natural meadow vista on the east side of Swenson Way, but this is necessary to prevent street parking, which is illegal. Installation of a latrine adjacent to Swenson Way would be slightly offensive, however, is necessary to maintain a sanitary site near water sources. The visual impacts would be mitigated somewhat by using a design with an aggregate surface. Burying or relocating existing power lines would improve visual aesthetics along the pond and Swenson Way.

11c. Identifying both the pond and Blacktail Deer Creek corridor as a public site will expand the local recreational opportunities. Providing parking, a latrine and trails will make this a “user-friendly” area for anglers and visitors watching small, non-game wildlife. Planting brood stock in the pond and other fish will be an exciting lure to youth anglers. After the proposed site development, the site could be an ideal setting to host school field trips to study fisheries management, angling education, vegetative and aquatic education opportunities and typical picnics. The Department of Commerce has completed a Tourism Report supporting the improvements at the FAS; please refer to Appendix E.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		N/A				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

12a. A FWP consultant surveyed the site for cultural sites and found none.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		N/A				
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Significance Criteria (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CONTINUED)

2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Alternative A: No Action

The no action alternative would allow the site to continue in its existing natural state. One sign would be erected at the site to identify it as public land and identify the land donor. Parking is not permitted on Swenson Way, therefore access is limited to visitors shuttled to the site, bicyclists or pedestrians or others using similar small modes of transportation. The site would receive little visitation if off-road parking is not provided. It is likely that the public would park on the roadway illegally, resulting in future enforcement issues for the City of Dillon. Sanitation may become a problem without a latrine on site. The site would not be utilized to its initial goals of encouraging family and youth angling opportunities. Environmental impacts may be less, though visitors would trample vegetation and tend to disperse use throughout the site if designated routes are not provided. The BOA would work in conjunction with FWP to maintain the site, design and erect signs and pick up litter.

Alternative B: Construct parking area, contract portable latrine, erect signs, no trail improvements.

This alternative would be an overall lower development level than proposed. Alternative B would provide off-street parking as proposed in the attached master site plan (Appendix D). A portable latrine would be provided at least seasonally and serviced by a contractor. Approach signs, site identity, regulatory and land donor signs would be erected as proposed. The single-track trail around the lake would not be improved, nor would fishing nodes be constructed.

Off-street parking at the site would encourage visitation from those who need a vehicle to reach the site. Maintenance would be less than the Preferred Alternative C, if the trail is not improved. Latrine cleaning and pumping would be a contracted service, which would require more money from the BOA, but less time than if a member were to clean a more permanent facility on a regular basis. Signs leading people to the site would encourage visitation. If the site receives expected increased visitation, the vegetation around the pond would become trampled without designated paths and fishing nodes.

The BOA would be responsible for completing this level of development using a combination of contracted services, donated labor and materials. Construction would be subject to FWP standards and approval.

Preferred Alternative C: Proposed Action to construct parking area, install latrine, widen trails with woodchip surface and fishing nodes, erect signs.

The preferred alternative, as described earlier in this assessment, provides off-street parking, a vault latrine for year round use, designated trails surfaced with wood chips and bordered with railroad ties, footbridge, fishing nodes in strategic locations around the lake and signs to lead people to the site, identify it, list regulations, and note the land donor.

A cul-de-sac parking area has proven effective at other FASs in the state for entry/exit of all sizes of vehicles and provides easy, efficient parking. Off-street parking accommodates city regulations prohibiting roadside parking. Locating the parking area east of Swenson Way will also promote fishing on Blacktail Deer Creek; thus, dispersing use and increasing angling opportunities. A permanent latrine requires little maintenance and can be used year-round, unlike a flushing facility which must be closed 6-7 months of the year. Designating trails and fishing nodes and applying an inexpensive surface such as wood chips concentrates foot traffic on designated trails, rather than haphazardly throughout the site. Wide trails with a wood chip trail allows access for a greater number of people who may have slight physical limitations. Groups and family members requiring an easier level of access are more likely to participate in the activity with an improved trail. Signs are necessary to notify the public to their right to access this land. In this case, an urban youth and family angling opportunity is available and can be highly utilized for recreation and education.

The components of this alternative would be completed primarily by the BOA using a combination of contracted services, donated labor and materials. Construction would be subject to FWP standards and approval.

Alternative D: Construct asphalt parking area, install flush restroom, widen trails with compacted gravel surface, erect signs.

Alternative D proposes an overall higher level of development than the preferred alternative. An asphalt surfaced cul-de-sac parking area would be developed to comply with the subdivisions covenants. A single stall restroom unit would be plumbed into the adjacent public sewer and water lines under Swenson Way. Trails would be widened, but surfaced with compacted gravel. Approach, regulation, donor and identity signs would be erected as in the preferred alternative.

Though FWP understands that covenants are an attempt to provide consistency and maintain property values in given areas, an asphalt parking area is considered beyond the needs and aesthetic values of a natural area such as this. A gravel parking area of this small size would blend better with the natural surroundings. In addition, the cost of paving a parking lot is beyond the budget of FWP or the BOA.

A flush restroom facility would be a nice amenity to summer visitors, but has largely been dismissed as a feasible alternative due to the cost to install and maintain such a facility. In addition, it would be too expensive to heat this facility; therefore, the restroom would be closed for 6-7 months annually due to cold weather conditions. A full restroom facility is atypical of fishing access sites across the state.

Trails and fishing nodes with a compacted gravel surface would be more expensive to construct, but would provide a higher level of access to people with disabilities. The site would be ideal for a wide variety of visitor and a variety of activities.

The components of this alternative would be completed primarily by the BOA using a combination of contracted services, donated labor and materials. Construction would be subject to FWP standards and approval.

3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

FWP standard construction procedures include scarifying and seeding areas disturbed by construction to reduce erosion, weed infestation and moisture loss. Silt fences also reduce the chance of turbidity or siltation when working near water bodies. The site improvements are designed around existing use patterns illustrated by routes void of vegetation (trails). Site design retains as much large vegetation as possible.

Road barriers will restrict vehicles to designated routes. Natural rock road barriers and gravel road surfaces will aid in the new project blending with its surroundings.

Region 3 utilizes their Weed Management Program in cooperation with the county Weed Supervisor. Chemical application is done by a trained technician to reduce risks of spillage or incorrect use.

Erecting pedestrian crossing signs and painting a crosswalk across Swenson Way will help alert drivers of people crossing from the parking area to the pond area.

The project sponsors consider a sealed vault latrine or other restroom facility at the site a necessity. The sponsors will have to negotiate with the City of Dillon to determine an acceptable type of facility that is not cost prohibitive. The exterior surface material (aggregate) of a latrine can aid in its blend with the surrounding.

The project is a cooperative effort using many volunteered services and materials; however, the components must meet FWP standards. This will ensure that the site is consistent with the FAS program goals.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The Preferred (proposed) Alternative C is an effort to provide adequate access to a newly acquired fishing access site. Because of its urban location, it is expected to receive substantial visitation. If the site does not undergo some site protection measures, the anticipated increase in youth and family visitation may significantly impact the environmental resources from overuse of high-demand areas and pioneered trails. Conversely, if the site is over-developed, the negative aesthetic impacts to the area would be high. The anticipated visitation does warrant site protection, but it is not a municipal park, nor are the higher costs associated with initial construction and maintenance of high-level development desired.

This analysis did not reveal any significant impacts to the human or physical environment. As a prior gravel borrow area, the site is a man-made area. The proposed design utilizes trails previously established and lands that do not illustrate wetland characteristics. Minor impacts will occur to the vegetation during construction. Most of the minor impacts can be mitigated. No unique geological or physical features will be affected.

FWP and the BOA are working together to improve angler access, and recreational and educational opportunities in the Dillon area. In this time of budgetary constraints on government agencies, this is an important cooperative effort. FWP cannot afford to construct the improvements and maintain another site at this time, but can supply other in-house services to complete the project, such as design and technical advice. The BOA can raise funds for this urban project, publicize it, and has the manpower to maintain the site.

PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? *NO*
If an EIS is not required, explain <u>why</u> the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.
Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment under MEPA and NEPA, this environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed action; therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis.

2. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any, and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

The acquisition EA completed in 2002 included discussion about potential future improvements to the site. The public was provided a fourteen day comment period during which three comments were received. All comments supported the acquisition for the proposed uses.

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on the EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Two public notices in each of these papers: *Dillon Tribune, Montana Standard* (Butte), and the *Helena Independent Record;*
- One statewide press release;
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: *http://fwp.state.mt.us*.

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to notify them of the proposed project.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having few minor impacts, many of which can be mitigated, and the low likelihood of controversy.

3. Duration of comment period, if any.

The public comment period will extend for thirty (30) days following the publication of the second public notice in area newspapers (Helena Independent Record, Montana Standard—Butte, and Dillon Tribune). Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, 6 May 2003 and can be mailed to the address below:

Blacktail Pond FAS Improvements
Fish, Wildlife and Parks
1400 S. 19th Ave.
Bozeman, MT 59718-5496
Or e-mailed to: *gwalker@montana.edu.*

4. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Sue Dalbey
Independent Contractor
Dalbey Resources
926 N. Lamborn St.
Helena, MT 59601
406-443-8058

Jerry Walker
Regional State Park Manager
FWP
1400 S. 19th Ave
Bozeman, MT 59718-5496
406-994-3552

APPENDICES

A. 23-1-110 MCA Qualification Checklist
B. Site Location Map
C. Site Aerial Photo
D. Master Site Plan
E. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
F. Clearance Letter – State Historic Preservation Office